

LITTLE SAIGON NEIGHBORHOOD PARK

DESIGN NARRATIVE

19 October 2020

CONTEXT

The Little Saigon neighborhood park site was purchased by Seattle Parks and Recreation in 2013 to create open space in a high density urban area. The long and narrow site (50' x 235') is located at 1224 S. King Street and extends to S. Jackson Street on the north side. On the south end, the site is positioned between Nisei Vets Hall and the Victorian Row historic apartment block and across the street from Lam's Asian Market. Two commercial buildings are built to the property lines on the north end. The site is currently leased by Lam's Asian Market for use as a gravel parking lot. The site has a 21 foot grade difference from S. King Street on the low side to S. Jackson Street on the high side, with 12 feet of grade change taking place close to the north property line. A very large Weeping Willow tree growing on the Victorian Row apartment's site has branching that extends more than 20 feet into the park.

ENGAGEMENT

Special attention has been given to engaging with the multiple ethnic communities located in the neighborhood. There has been targeted outreach with presentations and questionnaires provided to multiple groups. The public comments were analyzed to provide ideas and direction for the final design.

THE DESIGN CONCEPT:

Working with the Friends of Little Saigon Park, the community, and the Seattle Parks Department, Murase Associates developed a design plan that strives to achieve the community goals on a very complex site. The public had concerns about park safety and the proposed design follows basic principles for designing safe public spaces.

Starting at the north end at S. Jackson, there is a small concrete plaza (12' x 32') adjacent to the wide sidewalk. This plaza is the location for artist Kalina Chung's gateway feature which is inspired by the multicultural makeup of the neighborhood. Patterns present on the feature will be carried down through the park on the front face of benches. The plaza overlooks the entire park and is at the top of a concrete ADA accessible ramp and set of stairs. Pedestrian pole lights are located in the bamboo planters and light the stairs and ramp.

At the bottom of the ramp and stairs is the play area with brightly colored rubber safety surfacing and concrete seat walls on two sides. The play feature is composed of a low mound of rubber steppers with a scattering of golden yellow rubber balls.

Below the small middle concrete plaza there is a set of stairs with three rows of amphitheater style seating on one side. A 5 foot wide concrete ADA ramp connects the top and bottom of the amphitheater/stair on the east side.

There is a small gently sloping lawn area south of the amphitheater. The lawn has concrete paths on both sides with low concrete seating walls on the east side.

At the south end of the site at S. King St. there is a larger concrete plaza with moveable tables and chairs where small community The SDOT parking strip on S. King St. can provide space for Seattle Park's maintenance truck access and temporary parking for a food truck.

DESIGN NARRATIVE FOR GATEWAY FEATURE BY ARTIST KALINA CHUNG

Slide 12:

Beginning in February, I was able to connect with many community partners in the area, both in person & online. With these invaluable conversations of collected experiences and community stories in mind and heart, I turned to Vietnam's history, and my own experiences there. I remembered my first visit to Vietnam, going to my aunt's home, which felt like it was 7 stories tall. Her home is a structure specific to Vietnam, known as a tube house.

This style of home was built to purposefully extend space upwards, adding generational familial space, flow, and typically downstairs storefronts. Many families create a green space and garden on the roof. When looking at the park space, I see similarities in the rectangular shape and the architectural anticipation of surrounding buildings to come. In relation to Seattle's growing city, I'd like to acknowledge the versatile ways the Vietnamese people adapted their city life's architecture when faced with rapid growth and limited space.

In many traditional Pan-Asian homes, the openness of windows are placed to create flow and connect us in our interior space to the beauty of the exterior, or the natural world. Each culture has its own traditional designs and motifs related to accomplish this, as seen in the window lattices of homes and temples.

I plan to showcase a range of motifs (patterns recognizable of Pan-Asia), that together unify our shared notion of home, in relation to Seattle, this land, our ancestry, and our connection to the outdoors. Not everyone in the city has access to nature right outside their windows, but this park can do that for its visitors.

Slide 13:

From the busy city street exterior, folk will transition into a park oasis interior. I hope for the structure to appear light, in opposition of the continual growing density of Seattle. This is big picture concept and the specific motif designs are not final. Material is painted steel, scale and color to come during design development. Next steps include continuing community conversations & engagement with parks over next several months.